

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for permitting a user to temporarily use a resource, comprising:  
receiving user identity information with an identity confirmation device of the  
resource;  
confirming the identity of the user with a security device of the resource;  
providing the user with access to the resource;  
monitoring and recording information about use of the resource with a monitoring  
system of the resource;  
reacquiring the resource from the user; and  
obtaining resource use information from the resource monitoring system of the  
resource.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the user identity information is obtained  
from an identity card of the user.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the identity confirmation device  
comprises a card reader.
4. The method of claim 3, further comprising cross-referencing the user  
identity information with information stored in a resource memory.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the user identity is confirmed by receiving and confirming a code entered by the user.

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6. The method of claim 5, wherein the security device comprises a keypad.

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7. The method of claim 6, further comprising cross-referencing the received user code with information stored in a resource memory.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising obtaining user identity and resource information once the user takes the resource.

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9. The method of claim 8, wherein the user identity and resource information is transmitted from the resource over a short-range wireless communications system.

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10. The method of claim 1, wherein the resource use information is obtained from the resource once the resource has been returned.

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11. The method of claim 19, wherein the resource use information is transmitted from the resource over a short-range wireless communications system.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the user is permitted to use the resource in exchange for a rental fee.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising providing a transaction  
5 summary to the user once the user terminates resource use.

14. The method of claim 12, further comprising automatically billing the user once the resource is reacquired.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising locating and retrieving the  
10 resource after the user has terminated resource use.

16. A method for permitting a user to temporarily use an automobile,  
comprising:

15 receiving identity information from a user identity card with a card reader provided on the exterior of the automobile;

receiving a user code with a security device provided on the exterior of the automobile;

unlocking the automobile doors in response to receiving a user code that correctly  
20 corresponds to the identity card; and

permitting the automobile engine to be started once the user identity card is received by a card reader located inside the automobile.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the user identity and automobile  
5 information is transmitted from the automobile to a central office over a short-range wireless communications system when the automobile is taken by the user.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising sensing and recording use  
10 conditions of the automobile with a vehicle monitoring system.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the vehicle monitoring system monitors  
the mileage driven and duration of use.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the vehicle monitoring system further  
15 monitors the places where the automobile is taken in conjunction with a GPS device of the automobile.

21. The method of claim 16, further comprising obtaining automobile use  
20 information from the automobile upon reacquisition of the automobile.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the automobile use information is transmitted from the automobile over a short-range wireless communication system to a central office.

5 23. The method of claim 16, wherein the user is permitted to use the automobile in exchange for a rental fee.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising providing a transaction summary to the user upon receiving a use termination communication from the user.

10 25. The method of claim 23, further comprising automatically billing the user for use of the automobile upon receipt of the use termination communication.

15 26. The method of claim 23, further comprising locating and retrieving the automobile after the user has communicated termination of use.

27. An access/monitoring system adapted for use in an automobile that can be made available for temporary use by a user, the system comprising:

a central controller;

20 an identity confirmation device that determines the identity of the user;

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a security device that confirms the identity of the user; and  
a monitoring system capable of recording use conditions of the automobile.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the identify confirmation device  
5 comprises a card reader provided on the exterior of the automobile that reads information  
from a user identity card.

29. The system of claim 27, wherein the security device is a keypad provided  
on the exterior of the automobile that accepts user code information from the user.

30. The system of claim 27, further comprising a communications system that  
transmits information to and receives information from a central office.

31. The system of claim 27, further comprising a display device that  
15 communicates information to the user.

32. The system of claim 27, further comprising a printing device that provides  
the user with a summary of use information.